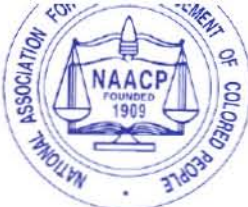


NAACP



*We Harnessed The Past . . . Help Us
Secure The Future . . . Join Now!*

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Washington, D.C. 20554

REV. JAMES DEMUS
Executive Director

July 16, 2004

Re: WC Docket No. 03-133

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners:

During last week's NAACP Annual Convention, hundreds of attendees were outraged to learn that the Commission is considering an increase in the fees charged for calls made via pre-paid calling cards. I write to you today with the hope that you will maintain the affordability of calling cards for low-income minorities.

Pre-paid calling cards are the primary means of communication for many African-Americans; an estimated 70% of households have used the cards. The cards also offer a reliable means for those living on substandard incomes. Some 60% of card users earning less than \$20,000 annually report making calls regularly.

The cards are cost-effective and allow families to stay in touch regardless of income. But the value extends beyond mere correspondence. For Americans who can't afford (or don't have sufficient credit history) to establish home phone service, calling cards offer a vital avenue for contacting potential employers and physicians and for completing many of life's daily duties.

The last few years have been hard enough for African Americans living along the poverty line – unemployment is up 28% since 2001 and consumer prices for fuel and dairy are on the rise. The last thing they need is to face new fees tacked on to low cost telephone services, particularly given the fact that it is the large, local phone companies that will benefit most from the additional revenue.

Thus, I challenge you not to impose additional fees on pre-paid calling cards and to stand by current policy, which has ensured affordable phone service for so many Americans.

Sincerely,

**CHICAGO SOUTHSIDE BRANCH
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE**

800 East 78th Street - Chicago, Illinois 60619

Phone: 773-487-9600 Fax: 773-487-9633